

A Citizens' Guide to a Cleaner Memphis

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Foreword

Memphis is a great place to live, but there are problems that plague our city's vistas and our citizens' health. What can you do about them?

We can all be more conscientious citizens, and it helps to be aware that there are laws and code ordinances designed to solve, or at least control, these problems. This handbook has been compiled to provide you with all of the information you need to contribute to our city's clean up and comply with its laws, as well as to outline the resources and support provided by your city government to assist you in achieving these goals.

Litter—Something to be Bugged About

What is the definition of litter?

Litter is the result of the improper disposal of solid waste; it's trash, it's ugly, and it's caused by **people**. Litter doesn't just happen—it is the result of the careless handling of waste, or just a complete lack of caring.

OK, you're not one of the people we're talking about; you never litter, but you can still do something to help solve the problem of litter, and make your community a better place to live. To find out how, read on.

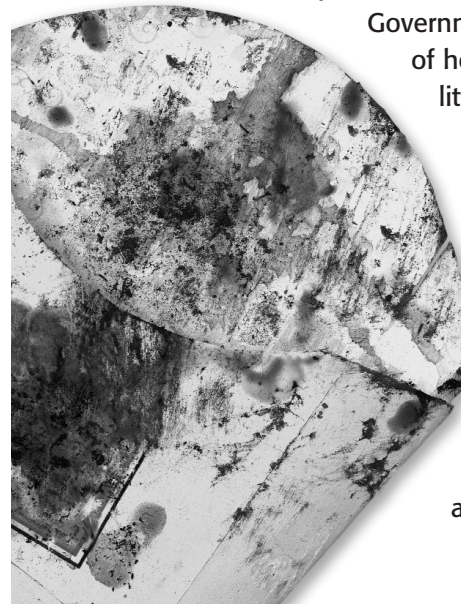
How can litter impact your community?

Litter is more than ugly, it's expensive. Your local and state governments spend millions of your tax dollars just to pick up litter.

Government crews and volunteers spend thousands of hours picking up litter in your community, but litter clean-ups alone cannot control or solve the problem.

A cleaner Memphis—or one filled with litter—is the result of our state of mind.

The attitude of a community's citizens ultimately determines whether city streets are clean. Selfish, insensitive attitudes such as those expressed by people who say, "I don't care," "It isn't my responsibility," "I've always done it this way," or "Hey, I'm giving someone a job," can leave a community suffering from more than litter.



Clean communities generally have lower crime rates, better chances of attracting new businesses, and healthier environments, which improve the quality of life for everyone.

Where does litter come from?

Motorists and pedestrians are most often blamed for litter, and they are responsible for a lot, but they actually represent only two of the seven primary sources of litter. The other frequent sources of litter include:

- household trash (improperly contained!)
- commercial dumpsters
- uncovered trucks
- loading docks
- construction sites



Litter from these sources, along with the stuff carelessly thrown aside by pedestrians and motorists, can be spread by the wind, traffic, or even carried by water. Litter can keep moving until it ends up trapped against a curb, a building, or a fence. Once litter has accumulated, it invites people to add more.

People litter where they feel no sense of ownership; where litter has already accumulated; and where they believe someone else will pick up after them. But mainly people litter because they just don't care.

What can you do to show you care, and help solve the problem of litter?

Here are some solutions:

- Put trash in the nearest trash can.
- Make sure trash cans have lids that can be securely fastened.
- Carry a litter bag in your car.
- Call 52-CLEAN (522-5326) to report littering motorists.
- Volunteer to organize a neighborhood clean up.
- Report illegally dumped garbage and debris to the Mayor's Citizen Service Center by calling (901) 576-6500.

Littering, whether knowingly or negligently, is punishable by law.

- ★ Memphis Code, Section 9-56-21; Memphis Code, Section 9-60-2; Shelby County Code, Chapter 28, Article II, Section 28.77; Tennessee Code 39-14-501 through 39-14-511

The Problems of Property Neglect

WEEDS AND GRASS

Weeds and grass: how high is too high?

Keeping the grass cut is the responsibility of every property owner. Controlling the height and density of weeds, brush, vines, and trees is more than a matter of keeping the neighborhood pretty. Overgrown lots can harbor snakes and rats, contribute to mosquito problems, and even provide cover for criminal activities.

Whether a property is occupied by a home or business—or is just a vacant lot—the same rules apply. Mowing the lawn does more than keep neighborhoods attractive; it keeps them safe.



What can you do to control dangerous weeds and brush?

Here are some options:

- Clip it! To keep your neighborhood attractive and safe, keep your grass (and weeds) cut, and never let it grow beyond a height of more than six inches; if you have a large tract (more than two acres) a maximum height of twelve inches is permissible.
- Volunteer to help elderly neighbors maintain their lawns.
- Report weed and grass violations on vacant or occupied properties by contacting the Mayors Citizens Service Center, (901) 576-6500.

- ★ Memphis Code, Section 9-96-2 through Section 9-96-3 and Section 14-4-48; Shelby County Code Section 25-189; Shelby County Health Codes, Section 16-457 and Section 16-458; Shelby County Housing Code, 48-49

BLIGHTED BUILDINGS

What is a blighted building?

Poorly maintained properties can affect a community's attractiveness and even its property values, but unoccupied buildings can present other problems: they can harbor health hazards, provide sites for illegal activities, or even cause injuries to passersby.

If an unoccupied house becomes structurally unsafe, or is deemed unfit for human habitation it is legally considered to be a vacant building. Owners of vacant residential dwellings can be required by law to repair, or in some way



alter or secure, or even demolish the house.

Commercial property owners (or operators, tenants, or lessees who have a legal or equitable interest in the property) have an obligation to properly maintain their vacant properties. Even if a site is not being used, those responsible for the property are required to maintain it to prevent any buildings and structures from becoming dangerous, neglected or blighted.

What can you do to prevent blighted buildings from affecting your neighborhood?

Contact the offending building owner and ask them to do a better job of maintaining and securing their property. Or, report them by contacting the Mayors Citizens Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

★ Memphis Code, Article 3, Sec. 14-8-5; Memphis Housing Code, Section 48-31, 48-32, 48-33, and 48-39

EVICCTIONS

How do evictions affect the environment?

Evictions are a distasteful last-resort for landlords, and certainly a personal tragedy in the lives of their tenants. When a court rules that an eviction is to take place, however, the community can be affected by more than the unfortunate social aspects of the legal action. Part of the process of an eviction dictates that a tenant's belongings may be set out on the street; beyond the personal inconvenience this causes the evicted party, this process can generate



litter and create an unsightly eyesore for the entire community.

The City of Memphis and Shelby County have joined forces to reduce neighborhood blight related to the eviction process. To minimize the negative impact of evictions, the City of Memphis has adopted an ordinance which regulates the manner in which landlords and management companies dispose of tenant property. The landlord or management company must:

- Bag or box the tenant's discarded property.
- Place all items on City property or right-of-way in an orderly manner.
- Notify the Mayor's Citizen Service Center that an eviction has occurred by calling (901) 576-6500.
- Remove and dispose all items placed in a City right-of-way within the allotted timeframe.

What can you do to help reduce environmental problems caused by evictions?

Call the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500 to report debris resulting from an eviction.

★ Memphis Code, Ordinance Number 5091; Memphis Code, Chapter 9, Article 1, Division 4, Section 9-56-30 through Section 9-56-33

Taking it to the Streets

SIDEWALKS, CURBS, & FRONTAGES

Who is responsible for maintaining sidewalks, curbs, and reverse frontages?

You are, if you're a property owner. That median strip between the sidewalk and the street doesn't actually belong to you, but you're still responsible for keeping it up, just like the rest of your yard. It's also your duty to maintain any sidewalks, curbs and "reverse frontages" that abut your property (if your property backs up to a street instead of another privately owned lot.) "Reverse frontage" refers to any easement between your property and that street; it's like the median out in front, so you have to keep it cut and free of debris (even if it's separated from your property by a fence).

What can you do to help maintain sidewalks, curbs and reverse frontages?

If you own residential or commercial land which abuts city streets or walkways, maintain the medians (and any reverse frontages) as if they were part of your property; keep it clipped and clean. You also need to make sure that all sidewalks and curbs adjoining your property are free of debris; plus, it is your responsibility to keep sidewalks in good repair and condition—even replacing them if necessary.

To report sidewalks, curbs, and reverse frontages that aren't being maintained properly, contact the Mayor's Citizens Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

- ★ Memphis Code, Section 12-24-1 through Section 12-24-9; Shelby County Code, Chapter 26.5 through Chapter 26.53

STORM DRAINS

How can you help wash environmental troubles away? Keep your community's storm drains clean and litter free! **Storm drains are ONLY for rain!**

That means that you shouldn't rake or blow yard waste into the street to let the rain wash it down the gutters. Grass clippings, leaves and tree limbs can clog storm drains and cause street flooding. So, never throw **litter and debris** into the street!



What flows from your home into the storm drains can also contribute to polluting ground water; so, you should sweep up **pesticides, fungicides, and fertilizers** that fall on your sidewalks and driveway, and avoid using them at all when it looks like heavy rains may threaten.

That's also why, as a responsible pet owner, you should always scoop the poop: **animal waste** contains disease causing bacteria that can wash down the storm drains and contaminate our waterways. And, as a responsible citizen, of course, you'll want to recycle all **hazardous waste** such as motor oil, antifreeze and radiator fluid, as well as toxic household waste such as paints and household cleansers.

For more information, call the Storm Water Program: (901) 576-4349.

ILLEGAL SIGNS

Is it a good sign?

Hey, there's no harm in putting up a sign on a light post to promote a garage sale or find a lost pet, right? **Wrong.**

It is illegal to place signs of any kind on any public property. Public property includes and is not limited to any street, crosswalk, curb, building, telephone or light pole, stop sign, railing, gate, bridge, underpass, overpass, right-of-way; or even tree, bush, or shrub on a public easement (which includes the grass median strip between the street and a sidewalk).

Signs are only permitted on private property with the consent of the owner or occupant.

That all goes for political campaign and referendum signs, too; and they may not be posted longer than 90 days prior to any election.



What can you do to minimize visual clutter caused by illegal signs?

- Report illegal signs to the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

- ★ Memphis Code, Chapter 10, Article 12, Section 9 (as amended by Ordinance #5073); Shelby County Code Chapter 20, Article 10, Section 20-161

GRAFFITI

Is graffiti a form of art?

Graffiti is an act of vandalism, and it affects most urban areas. It is defined as



words, colors, and shapes that are drawn, scratched, or etched on public or private property without consent. It's done without permission and it's against the law.

Graffiti can also send a signal that people don't care about their community, which can attract other forms of crime. Graffiti decreases our feeling of safety, lowers property values, and reduces business growth and tourism.

What can you do to help eliminate the problem of graffiti?

Graffiti can be prevented by keeping neighborhoods neat and clean; removing graffiti promptly; and reporting it to the appropriate enforcement officials and/or the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500. To help in your removal efforts, Memphis City Beautiful can provide Graffiti Paint-out Kits; call (901) 522-1135. (Note: The city removes graffiti from public property only.)

- ★ Memphis Code Chapter 20, Section 20-151 through 161; Shelby County Code, Chapter 22, Article 1, Section 22-1.

ESCAPING LOADS

What is an escaping load?

An escaping load is any object that flies out of the back of a truck. Once it hits the ground, though, it becomes litter. So, tarp it! When transporting anything in a truck, it's your responsibility to keep it covered.

Transporting unsecured loads is hazardous and **illegal!** Trucks carrying uncovered loads spew litter on to the streets of Memphis everyday, and it costs millions of your tax dollars each year to pick it up. Things escape from the backs of private pickup trucks just as easily as from the back of commercial and garbage trucks; whether you're hauling something for commercial or private purposes, all things transported by truck must be covered.

It doesn't matter if its furniture, or debris from a remodeling job, or the box from your kid's Happy Meal, if it's in the back of a truck it has to be secured. If it becomes airborne due to high speeds or bumpy roads, you're responsible: for the litter, *and the fine.*

According to Tennessee Code 39-14-507, trucks and other vehicles carrying materials that can be blown onto highways are required to secure and/or cover their loads. Items blown from the back of your truck are considered litter, and littering in Tennessee is a misdemeanor. If convicted, you will pay a \$500 fine, court costs and up to 40 hours of public service, and may work in a recycling center for up to 8 hours.

Driving with an unsecured load can destroy a lot more than scenery. Blowing debris is also one of the leading causes of traffic accidents, and can result in severe injuries or death.

What can you do to help prevent cargo from turning into trash?

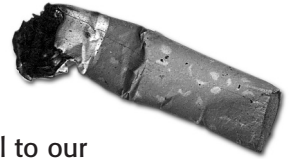
We all share a responsibility to keep Memphis clean. You may not intentionally litter, but if you are not securing the items in your pickup truck, they could become litter, so: tarp it! bag it! tie it! strap it!

- Buy a cover! A tarp or cargo netting can be purchased for under \$20 (including tie-downs) at most home improvement or automotive stores.

- Secure a 5-gallon bucket with a lid in a corner of the truck bed for use as a trash can.
- Don't rely on the weight of miscellaneous items to keep them in your truck. Bumps, turns and sudden stops can dislodge even heavy items like furniture, tools and equipment.

- ★ Memphis Code Sec. 11-52-1; Shelby County Code, Section 20-149 and Section 20-23 (Ordinance No. 90, Section 1, dated August 5, 1992); Tennessee Code 39-14-507

CIGARETTE LITTER



Can cigarettes harm more than your health?

Cigarette butts are litter. So smoking can be harmful to our environment, as well as to our health.

Cigarette butts represent over 20 percent of the litter collected at most community clean up events. Although they are small, cigarette butts have a big negative impact on a city. They are unsightly, and accumulate on streets, curbs, bus shelters, outside buildings—everywhere! As one of the smallest forms of litter, cigarette butts present a special problem: when dropped to the ground, they are often washed into streams, lakes, rivers, and the ocean by storm water runoff. This poses a danger to animals and fish that mistake the filters for food.

Cigarette filters contain cellulose acetate fiber which degrades slowly—very slowly—and in many cases, it takes years.

Thanks to smokers who do not properly dispose of their cigarette litter, our local government has to spend tax dollars for street sweeping, park maintenance, and storm drain maintenance. Businesses have to pay to clean up around their entrances, exits, and parking lots. Ultimately, the tab for this expense filters down to you.



What can you do about cigarette litter?

- Use receptacle urns or portable ashtrays when smoking outside.
- Do not throw butts out of car windows.
- Call 52-CLEAN (522-5326) to report littering motorists.
- Educate smokers ... cigarette butts are litter, too!

- ★ Tennessee Code 39-14-501; Memphis Code Chapter 9, Section 9-60-5; Shelby County Code, Chapter 28, Article II, Section 28-83.

Garbage Handling & Disposal

HOUSEHOLD TRASH

Where should you put household trash?

Residents of the city of Memphis are obligated to have a trash receptacle for disposal of their garbage. Receptacles can be obtained from the Division of Public Works, Solid Waste Management, by calling (901) 576-6851 (select option #2 from their menu of services), or by calling the Mayor's Citizen Service Center.

Place your garbage bins at curbside by 7:00 am on your trash pickup day; it is required by law to remove them from the curb before 7:00 pm.

Special Note: It is against the law for residents to burn trash within the city limits.

- ★ Memphis Code, Section 9-56-22; Collection services subject to health department regulations. Memphis Code, Section 15-7 and Section 15-23; Memphis Code, Chapter 9, Section 9-56-10.

RECYCLING

Recycling Is good for the community, and the City of Memphis strongly encourages recycling.

The City of Memphis, Solid Waste Management, provides recycling bins and collects recycled paper (including shredded mail), plastics, aluminum, glass, paperboard and corrugated packaging from these containers at curbside on regular trash pick up days.

Five recycling drop-off centers are also available for residents and businesses not serviced by the City of Memphis Solid Waste Management:

Downtown Located in the gravel parking area on Mud Island Drive at the North entrance to Mud Island Park.

East Memphis On Moore Road, approximately 300 yards off of Germantown Parkway South, just south of Shelby Showplace Arena at the Agricenter.

Midtown On the corner of Cooper and Walker in the First Congregational Church parking lot.

Southeast Located at the Hickory Hill Community Center, 3910 Ridgeway.

American Way Located at 3197 Farrisview Blvd, off American Way, just west of the Lamar intersection—recycling material should be placed in the carts outside the gate.



How can you become involved in recycling?

Participate in curbside recycling. If you don't already have a recycling bin, call the Division of Public Works, Solid Waste Management office at (901) 576-6851 to obtain one.

If you're a member of a group that would like to learn more about recycling, a Recycling Coordinator is available to visit schools, neighborhood associations, and civic organizations to educate and support recycling within the city. To arrange a visit call the Division of Public Works, Solid Waste Management office at (901) 576-6851 or www.memphiswaste.org.

- ★ The City recycles in part as a response to the Tennessee Solid Waste Processing and Disposal Rule 1200-1-7-09 Waste Disposal Reduction Goals. Effective September 29, 1993.

YARD WASTE

How should you dispose of yard waste?

It is illegal to dump or blow yard clippings and leaves into streets or storm drains; they can cause flooding and water pollution.

Leaves and yard clippings should be bagged and placed at the curb for pickup. Alternatively, you may want to consider composting your leaves and yard clippings; for information on creating a compost bin you may contact the Shelby County Agricultural Extension Center at (901) 752-1207.

Tree limbs, trimmed by the homeowner/resident, may also be left at the curb for pickup. Limbs must be cut into dimensions that can be handled by the Solid Waste Management employees. Limbs or logs in excess of three inches in diameter and five feet in length will not be collected. *As required by law, any tree limbs cut by private contractors will not be picked up by the City.*

For additional information about the collection of yard waste and tree limbs, contact the Division of Public Works, Solid Waste Management at

(901) 576-6851 or visit the City of Memphis web page, www.memphistn.org.

If you experience a problem with the collection of yard waste that is left at curbside, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

★ Memphis Code, Sec. 9-56-10; Tennessee Code Section 39-14-504 and 505

APPLIANCES AND BULKY ITEMS

What can you do with an old refrigerator or washing machine?

Appliances and bulky items may be placed at curbside for pickup on regular residential trash collection days. Be sure that these items are safe and secure before placing them on the curb to prevent any safety hazards (for example: remove refrigerator doors or tape them shut).

It's also a good idea to notify Solid Waste Management in advance when heavy, bulky items such as appliances will be left at curbside by calling the Division of Public Works, Solid Waste Management at (901) 576-6851.

For problems relating to the pick up of appliances or other bulky items left at curbside, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

★ Tennessee Code, Section 39-14-505; Memphis Code, Section 9-56-10; Memphis Code, Article 1, Division 2, Section 9-56-17 through 9-56-18

CONSTRUCTION DEBRIS

Who cleans up the debris from construction sites?

Contractors are responsible for removing all debris and litter accumulated through the creation of a physical structure; that includes everything from bits of wire and scraps of lumber to the construction crew's empty potato chip bags and Vienna sausage cans. The rule applies to contractors involved in building structures for residential or commercial use. It is not the responsibility of the City of Memphis or Shelby County to remove construction debris.

What can you do about construction debris?

If you've employed a contractor to build or add improvements to your home, you can help alleviate this problem by requesting that the contractor remove any and all construction debris accumulated through the construction process. Commercial contractors should also be instructed to remove such debris from business sites.

If a contractor fails to meet their obligation to remove the debris generated by their work on a project, or dumps it at the curb, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

If you've tackled a small home improvement project on your own, the City of Memphis maintains landfills for the convenience of residents who need to dispose of construction waste.

These sites accept only one load of construction debris at a time, and you must be a Memphis resident to use them. You must show proof of residency by presenting a valid driver's license and a Memphis Light Gas & Water utility bill. Loads transported in commercial vehicles will not be accepted. If residents wish to deposit more than one load at a time, the average cost is \$22 per load.



THE CITY OF MEMPHIS RESIDENTIAL DUMP SITE LOCATIONS

BFI Holmes Road Landfill

5494 Malone Road*

M-F 6am-4:30pm

Sat 6am-12:30pm

(901) 794-8071

Closed Sunday

*East side Malone/South of Holmes

BFI North Shelby Landfill

7111 Old Millington Road

M-F 6am-4:30pm

Sat 7am-12:30pm

(901) 872-7258, ext. 1

Closed Sunday

★ Shelby County Code, Section 26.5-51; Memphis Code, Chapter 12, Section 12-24-3

ILLEGAL DUMPING

What is illegal dumping?

It is illegal to dump trash, debris, or litter in any location at any unauthorized site. Authorized sites are designated by the Division of Public Works. Illegal dumping sites are both unsightly and hazardous; they can adversely affect neighborhoods and the environment.

What can you do to help alleviate the problems caused by illegal dumping?

Organize a neighborhood cleanup to remove illegally dumped materials and restore the area.

If you witness an act of illegal dumping, call the Littering Motorists Hotline at 52-CLEAN (522-5326).

To report unauthorized dump sites near you, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

★ Tennessee Code 39-14-504 and 505; Shelby County Code, Chapter 28, Article 4, Section 28-116

HOUSEHOLD HAZARDOUS WASTE

How should you handle hazardous household waste?

The improper disposal of some items in your household could present a hazard to the entire community. Tossing out things such as paint, insecticides, fertilizers, or household cleansers may contain chemicals that are harmful to the environment and could cause significant problems for plants, wildlife, and even people.

What can you do to minimize hazards caused by some household waste?

All Shelby County residents can utilize the permanent Household Hazardous Facility, 6305 Haley Road, Memphis, TN 38134. Hours of operation are Tuesdays and Saturdays, from 8:30 a.m.–1:00 p.m. The limit is 15 gallons or 100 pounds of material. No business or commercial waste is accepted.

Hazardous waste is not collected with our regular weekly solid waste system, and should not be mixed in with other items in your trash cans.

And whatever you do, don't allow hazardous household waste to be dumped on to the ground; that can cause an adverse affect on our city's storm water system. Similarly, you shouldn't pour such items into storm drains or dispose of them yourself at city landfills.

Special Note: Latex paint that is solidified or empty paint containers can be left at curbside for Solid Waste Management on your normal pickup day. If you have latex paint cans that contain liquid, you must leave them in a secure place until they dry up naturally before the sanitation department can accept them as part of your curbside solid waste collection.

For more information about the disposal of hazardous waste, contact the Division of Public Works, Solid Waste Management, at (901) 576-6851; Shelby County Roads and Bridges at (901) 379-4460; or www.memphiswaste.org. Businesses must contract with private companies for pick up of hazardous waste for a fee.

To report the improper disposal of hazardous household waste, such as dangerous household chemicals that are left at curbside, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.



★ Shelby County Code, Section 28-51, Section 28-54; Tennessee Code, Section 68-212-104; Shelby County Code, Chapter 28, Article 2, Section 28-118

TIRE DISPOSAL

What can you do when tires become trash?

City of Memphis residents can place up to four rimless car tires (in sizes up to 22.5") at curbside on regular trash days for pick up by Solid Waste Management.

The Shelby County Waste Tire Recycling Center, located at 3000 Elvis Presley Blvd., Memphis, TN 38116, will accept additional (or larger) tires for a nominal fee. For more information, contact the Shelby County Waste Tire Recycling Center at (901) 396-5448, Jodie at (901) 545-5423 or www.shelbycountyttn.gov. You may opt to contact a private waste disposal or even a tire company to dispose of used and old automobile tires.

To report the illegal dumping of tires in your area, contact the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500.

Living with Pets that Share Our City

Why does the city care about your pet?

Do you let your dog run loose? People who do could be responsible for bringing harm to their fellow citizens, especially motorists, and other animals, including their own dog.

It is unlawful for any pet owner to willfully allow their animals (other than cats) to roam freely on any public or private property (unless designated as an "off leash" area).

In addition to walking dogs on a leash, dog owners also need to be aware of their responsibility to pick up after Fido along their route. It is a crime to leave



dog waste behind. Why? It will eventually be washed into the street, down the gutter and into the storm drain. That sounds like the end of the problem, right? No, it's just the beginning: storm drains lead straight to waterways; with no filtration system, the bacteria from your pet's waste can contaminate our water supply.

What can you do to take responsibility for your pet?

When walking your dog, keep it on a leash unless in a designated "off leash" area.

Next time you walk your dog, take a plastic bag to pick up your

dog's waste and throw it in the trash. You can even recycle by using the plastic bag your newspaper comes in to pick up the waste. To report pet owners who ignore their responsibility to pick up pet waste, call the Storm Water Hotline at (901) 576-6721.

If you've lost your pet, contact:

- 1) Humane Society of Memphis & Shelby County - (901) 937-3900
- 2) Memphis Animal Services - (901) 363-1416

★ Memphis Code, Chapter 8-16, Sections 6 through 9; Shelby County Code, Chapter 3, Section 3-40, Paragraph (D) and Section 3-41; Tennessee Code, Section 44-8-408

Pests & Rodents

Why is it important to Control Pests and Rodents?

It isn't healthy to live with them. Occupants of single family dwellings and owners of multifamily dwellings are responsible for the extermination of insects, rodents, vermin, and other pests, in all structures, as well as around the exterior of their premises.

Retain an exterminator to eliminate any pests and rodents that you see. You should also take preventive measures to prevent pests and rodents by keeping

your home free of debris that may attract them as either food or habitat.

★ Memphis Code Chapter 9, Article 1, Section 9-80-7

Steps You Can Take to Promote a Cleaner Community

MAINTAIN YOUR PROPERTY. Owning a home is part of the American Dream. It fosters a sense of pride and accomplishment, but it requires a lot of work. Routine maintenance makes a positive impact on the appearance of your neighborhood, as well as, the attractiveness of your own property.

So, cut the lawn, prune trees and shrubs, plant some flowers, and keep your property and sidewalks free of junk, trash & debris.

There are other tips on your legal responsibility for maintaining your property throughout this handbook. In addition to those requirements, you should avoid parking vehicles on grass, and must remove inoperable motor vehicles from your property within 10 days. Repair damaged fences, and don't store commercial equipment or other items in open view.

MAINTAIN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD. Clean neighborhoods improve the aesthetic value and overall appearance of our city. Everyone should take responsibility for enhancing and maintaining their neighborhood.

If you don't already have a neighborhood association, consider forming one to add structure to your neighborhood's efforts to maintain its appearance. Once you're working with your neighbors, assign someone to conduct a survey to ascertain problems that affect your neighborhood (start by checking for the "ten most common code violations" which may be found on page 19 in this handbook); then write letters to notify property owners of any problems identified.

Other things you can do to improve your neighborhood include implementing a yard of the month program; creating a community garden on a vacant lot; landscaping a neighborhood entrance or gateway; or organizing a community clean-up (for details on how to plan your cleanup, see page 18 in this handbook).

FORM A NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION. There are more than 350 Neighborhood Associations in Memphis and Shelby County. In most instances, these associations were formed to improve or enhance their community.

The Office of Youth Services & Community Affairs Neighborhood Relations Department can assist you with the skills and information required to organize and develop a successful Neighborhood Association; call (901) 636-6589.

To begin the process of establishing your neighborhood association, take the following steps:

- Find five or more people to participate in organizing the association.
- Invite all of your neighbors to a meeting to discuss your goals and concerns, and ascertain special skills or talents they may have that would be helpful to achieving your goals.
- Initiate a neighborhood survey to identify problems that need to be addressed.
- Analyze your survey and plan a strategy to solve the problems cited.

ORGANIZE A NEIGHBORHOOD CLEANUP. A cleaner Memphis starts with you. Make a hands-on commitment to your neighborhood by organizing a clean up. Any time you improve the appearance of your community, you also help your neighbors. Children learn responsibility and civic pride. People begin to treat their surroundings with a little more care.

Every effort creates an ever-widening circle of positive results. And it all begins with you!

TIPS FOR A SUCCESSFUL CLEAN UP:

- Determine neighborhood needs.
- Select a project that is doable. People like to see immediate results.
- Determine a specific date and time for the clean up. Choose a rain date.
- Recruit volunteers. Involve as many people as possible: individuals, local organizations, churches, youth groups, etc. You can send out flyers, post in local businesses, on the internet, newsletters and the newspaper.
- If the clean up is large enough, appoint Team Leaders/Committee Chairmen.
- Ask for local business support. This can range from posting the promotional flyer to providing volunteers, food, drink, even a place to go to the bathroom.
- Select a place for volunteers to check in, pick up their tools, receive their assignment, etc.
- Have plenty of water and a First Aid kit available at the check-in site.
- A few days before the event, send out a Press Release to all Media.
- Always take "before and after" pictures.
- Make sure that all contributors and volunteers are recognized in some way.

CONTACT MEMPHIS CITY BEAUTIFUL. Memphis City Beautiful can help with your neighborhood clean up efforts and provide other services to help keep our city clean. For more information, call (901) 522-1135.

Some of the services offered include:

- **Tool Bank** - Groups can borrow tools for their clean up or beautification projects, including: rakes, shovels, clippers, gloves, etc. Heavy duty trash bags are also provided.
- **Litter Box Lending** - Litter boxes and liners are available to organizations that want to manage litter at special events.
- **Speakers Bureau** - Speakers can be provided to any organization, business or school group of 15 people or more.
- **Trash Pick-up** - After your clean up, City Beautiful can coordinate removal of debris with the City of Memphis Solid Waste Department.

The Ten Most Common Code Violations

1. ACCUMULATION OF JUNK, TRASH, AND DEBRIS

Accumulating junk, trash and other debris on residential property is a code violation. This includes, but is not limited to: discarded items, auto parts, appliances, furniture, building materials, tires, paper, cardboard, plastics or



dead limbs or branches. All garbage should be disposed of by putting it in the proper container and placing it on the curb for collection at the appropriate location and time. It is also a violation to allow trash carts to remain on the curb following pick-up.

2. OPEN STORAGE OF MATERIAL AND FURNISHINGS.

Storing equipment, materials, or furnishings that is dangerous to public health, safety, or welfare on residential property is a code violation. This may include, but is not limited to, the outdoor use of indoor furniture, outside storage of household appliances, auto parts, or building materials. It is also illegal to dump or discard any debris or material along the roadside or on any unoccupied property.

3. PARKING AND STORING INOPERABLE (JUNK) MOTOR VEHICLES. It is a violation to park, store, or leave or permit the parking, storing or leaving of any vehicle which is rusted, wrecked, junked, partially dismantled, inoperable or abandoned upon any property for over ten (10) days unless the vehicle is completely enclosed within a building or stored/ parked in connection with a licensed business or commercial enterprise operating pursuant to law when parking/storing of vehicles is necessary to operate the business.



4. EXCESSIVE WEEDS, GRASS, TREES AND VEGETATION. Allowing grass or weeds to grow over 12 inches high, or allowing plants, shrubs, or trees to grow in a manner that will obstruct pedestrian traffic or the visibility of motorists is a code violation. This includes, but is not limited to the overgrowth of trees and vegetation that block sidewalks or hang onto public streets or utility services.

5. OFF-STREET PARKING. Parking or storing any working, or non-working vehicle, on the lawn, grass, or sidewalk of any residential property is a code violation. This includes, but is not limited to the parking or storing of more than four vehicles for more than a ten day period at any single family residential structure, unless completely enclosed in a building.



6. SUBSTANDARD STRUCTURES AND FENCES. Any accessory structure, including storage sheds, garages, and fences that are considered structurally unsound or in need of repair in order to serve the intended purpose are code violations. This includes, but is not limited to, damages to any framing, walls, ceiling, floors, decking, and roofs.



7. SPECIAL USE AND RECREATIONAL VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT. No homeowner or tenant shall park or store any special use vehicle or recreational vehicle on residential property, unless the surface is made of concrete, asphalt or other approved material. It is a violation to park or store more than one recreational vehicle or special use vehicle equipment at any single family dwelling. This includes, but is not limited to parking or storing any boat, trailer, camper, or RV in the front of the yard or on any residential street.



8. COMMERCIAL VEHICLES AND EQUIPMENT. Parking or storing any commercial vehicle exceeding 8,000 pounds in weight on any residential property or residential street is a code violation. This includes, but is not limited to any 18-wheelers, dump trucks or rolled-back towing wreckers that are not actively being loaded or unloaded.



9. ABANDONED AND DERELICT STRUCTURES. It is a violation for any property owner to refuse to properly secure any structure he or she owns or is liable for in order to prevent loitering of vagrants or criminal activity. This includes, but is not limited to any vacant house, building or structure where the doors and windows are broken or open to casual entry.

10. GENERAL SERVICES AND REPAIR SHOPS. Operating a commercial business in a district zoned residential without proper permits is illegal. Certain commercial establishments are strictly prohibited in residentially zoned areas. This includes any for profit general repair services, such as automotive, equipment or appliance repair shops.



Community Support Agencies & Resources

CITY OF MEMPHIS MAYOR'S CITIZEN SERVICE CENTER

Purpose: The MCSC serves three primary functions for the Citizens of Memphis. They include:

- Accepting calls regarding citizen concerns, or requests for city services.
- Recording public opinions about city services and/or city policies and procedures.
- Providing general information, for example phone numbers for governmental services, tourist attractions, etc.

Special Note: The MCSC is equipped to receive and respond to calls from Spanish speaking citizens.

How to contact the MCSC: Citizens can access the MCSC by phone (901) 576-6500; by mail or fax (901) 576-6200; by entering a service request on-line at www.cityofmemphis.org; or by visiting our office in room 442 at City Hall.

Information required to initiate a service request:

1. Your name, address, and phone number - in order to ensure follow-up in the event we are unable to locate the problem area, or to verify that service is actually rendered.
2. The specific location of the problem. If possible, provide the specific address or the address next to it. If it is a corner lot, please provide the main cross streets and any visible landmarks.

How are citizens informed about the status and/or resolution of their call?

1. A written letter from the manager is mailed to each citizen who initiates a service request.
2. If a service request is entered on-line by a registered user, then the citizen can receive an automatic update of the status of his/her complaint.

Education and Outreach:

1. The Mayor's Talk Show is designed to educate citizens about the array of city services provided. The show is aired monthly on The Library Channel, WYPL-TV (Channel 18).
2. Informational tools such as door hangars, brochures, and specialty advertising products are available by request to citizens involved in neighborhood groups and other community education and outreach efforts. Whenever possible, MCSC staff members are available to attend community meetings.

MEMPHIS CITY BEAUTIFUL COMMISSION

The Memphis City Beautiful Commission (MCB) is the first and oldest beautification Commission in the nation. The mission of the Memphis City Beautiful Commission is to provide leadership in educating and involving Memphians toward beautification and environmental improvement. The organization's programs target all Memphians including schools, businesses, neighborhood associations, churches, civic groups, City agencies and environmental groups. MCB offers to the community a tool bank from which tools are loaned for neighborhood clean-ups. MCB administers a 52-CLEAN Hotline whereby citizens can anonymously report littering motorists. MCB also provides a Litter Box Lending Program for special events.

Phone: (901) 522-1135

THE OFFICE OF YOUTH SERVICES AND COMMUNITY AFFAIRS

The Office of Youth Services and Community Affairs (OYSCA) provides neighborhood and community associations with information about City resources, programs, grants and other services. It solicits neighborhood and community support for and participation in festivals, celebrations and other venues. The OYSCA partners with businesses, government, non-profits and other entities on neighborhood/community based planning efforts.

The OYSCA also facilitates workshops that offer leadership development and training and essentials skills necessary to start effective neighborhood and community associations as well as to maintain safe, attractive and peaceful communities.

The OYSCA is currently developing a capacity building model to help neighborhood and community associations identify their assets and use same to resolve problems/issues/concerns in their respective communities.

Phone: (901) 636-6503

THE SHELBY COUNTY ROADS & BRIDGES DEPARTMENT/ENVIRONMENTAL PROGRAMS

The Shelby County Environmental Programs office educates government, businesses, media, students and the public regarding litter reduction and how to reduce, reuse and recycle.

Shelby County Environmental offers educational programs in the Shelby County schools and participates in public events. This office also provides free holiday recycling for Christmas trees.

Phone: (901) 379-4410

PUBLIC WORKS - SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT

Solid Waste Management is responsible for the weekly collection and disposal of all solid waste within the City of Memphis in accordance with State and Federal laws. Service is provided to most single family homes, apartments with less than eight (8) units, and many small businesses. Solid Waste Management provides a recycling program, and utilizes yard waste and autumn leaves for compost and mulch production.

Phone: (901) 576-6851

Holiday Pick-up Information Line: (901) 576-6650

COMMUNITY ENHANCEMENT - GROUNDS MAINTENANCE

Grounds Maintenance is responsible for cutting vacant lots, vacated property, and right-of-ways. Grounds Maintenance performs street sweeping, herbicide spraying for weeds, clean-ups for special events, and is responsible for the overall beautification and maintenance of numerous city properties.

Phone: (901) 576-6500

Enforcement

CODE ENFORCEMENT

The purpose of the Department of Systematic Code Enforcement is to protect the public health, safety and welfare in existing buildings used for dwelling purposes. The department administers and enforces sections of the City of Memphis Code of Ordinances. These ordinances regulate the storage of inoperable or abandoned vehicles on public and private property, minimum housing standards for existing dwellings, and environmental conditions which may contribute to deterioration in the community.

Code Enforcement monitors and responds to thousands of potential violations each year. Most are discovered through citizen complaints, referrals from other agencies, inspector observations in an assigned area, and systematic inspections in a target area. Common violations include abandoned house or vehicles, appliances or junk stored on property, and structural defects on dwellings.

Inspectors must follow the law when handling a potential violation. Once a complaint is received, an inspector will conduct an investigation to determine if there is an ordinance violation. If there is a violation, the inspector must notify the owner verbally or in writing. When there are numerous violations, the owner is mailed a list of violations, and a "Notice of Hearings."

After a violation notice or order is issued for structural or environmental conditions, periodic follow-up inspections are conducted to determine if compliance has been met. The owner is usually given the opportunity to discuss the needed repairs and arrange a plan of action to meet compliance. Follow up inspections are done to determine if compliance is met. Depending on the circumstances and severity, code enforcement can opt to:

- Give an extension to meet compliance
- Court action
- Issue an order to vacate the premises
- Issue an order not to occupy until repairs are made
- Condemnation

Should the owner fail to comply, court action can be initiated at any time after the first follow up inspection. Code Enforcement utilizes the Environmental Court to resolve cases where the violator has voluntarily failed to comply.

Property owners are most often negligent or simply unaware that certain conditions are illegal and unsightly. Concerned citizens are encouraged to file a complaint regarding unsafe housing conditions and or inoperable vehicles with the Mayor's Citizen Service Center at (901) 576-6500 or on-line at www.cityofmemphis.org. Go to On-line support.

Due to the vast number of violations and complaints, as well as the legal process that inspectors must follow, it takes up to 3 weeks to process a violation.

Code Enforcement has also decentralized its offices to better serve and extend their outreach to the public. These offices are located throughout the city in all seven (7) council district as follows:

4575 Raleigh-LaGrange

(901) 576-4930

4225 Riverdale

(901) 576-6684

2471 Park

(901) 320-1614

701 N. Main

(901) 576-7464

1109 Mississippi

(901) 744-4713

1225 Vollintine

(901) 725-6554

1579 Hollywood

(901) 320-1033

MEMPHIS AND SHELBY COUNTY OFFICE OF CONSTRUCTION AND CODE ENFORCEMENT

The Memphis and Shelby County Office of Construction and Code Enforcement issues permits for business advertisements, and residential and commercial construction. This office also enforces building and zoning codes in Memphis and Shelby County. Shelby County Code Enforcement monitors and responds to commercial business code violations only. The officers can issue citations that order business owners directly to court when they are in violation. Other offices within this department include: Building, Licensing, Electrical, Mechanical, Plumbing, Zoning and Signs.

Phone: (901) 379-4200

MEMPHIS FIRE SERVICES – ANTI NEGLECT

The Anti-Neglect Department prevents multi-family housing, commercial and industrial buildings and structures in the City from becoming dangerous, neglected, blighted or abandoned. Regular inspections are conducted on abandoned structures and structures that are considered dangerous. Property owners are required to properly maintain the buildings based on the inspections. Those owners who fail to comply with the City's anti-neglect ordinances are issued citations and subsequently fined if problems are not corrected within the time allotted.

Phone: (901) 320-5356

MEMPHIS SHELBY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT – ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

The Bureau of Environmental Health Services works to improve the quality of life in Shelby County by controlling pollutants in the air, assuring a safe supply of water and food, and eliminating general environmental hazards. This bureau uses diverse methods and programs for a wide variety of purposes, such as enforcing sanitation codes in swimming pools and restaurants, inspecting healthcare facilities such as nursing homes, inspecting water fountains for lead poisoning, inspecting vacant or abandoned property to prevent pests from breeding there, and controlling mosquitoes, rats and other pests.

Phone: (901) 544-7600

THE SHELBY COUNTY ENVIRONMENTAL COURT

The Environmental Court has the jurisdiction to hear all cases brought in violation of the Memphis and Shelby County health, housing, fire, land subdivision, building, or zoning codes. Typically, a code enforcement agent will issue a citation to a person or property in violation of one of the aforementioned codes. Violators are usually given time to correct the violation before coming to court.

Once the case comes to the Court, the violator is given the opportunity to plead innocent or guilty. If he/she admits to the wrongdoing, then they are given time to correct the violation. If the defendant pleads innocent, the case is set for trial. Depending on the nature of the offense, the Court may assess fines and court costs. Fines are usually \$50, and can be charged for every day the offense occurred.

Before a citizen goes to the Environmental Court, the complaint should first be reported to the Mayor's Citizen Service Center (city) (901) 576-6500 or the Mayor's Assistance Center (county) (901) 545-4311. These resources provide valuable assistance that may clear up the problem before it comes to court.

In some cases, a citizen or group of citizens such as a neighborhood association or neighborhood watch may need to bring a complaint directly before the Environmental Court. In almost all cases, it is advised that a complaint come from a citizen group to prevent the perception that one person is targeting another individual.

City Ordinance 16-496 authorizes a private citizen to bring a complaint directly to the court provided that the citizen is willing to testify, if the need arises.

In order to file a complaint, a citizen must first acquire and complete an Affidavit of Complaint from the Courts.

Phone: (901) 545-3456

ILLEGAL SIGNS

Public Works/Solid Waste Management is also responsible for the enforcement of the City's Illegal Sign Ordinance. Illegal signs are defined as any unauthorized signs placed on publicly owned property. This includes, but is not limited to: right-of-ways or easements (typically, the grassy area between the street and curb), medians, publicly owned places, buildings, utility poles and boxes, traffic signs and control boxes, overpasses, bridges, trees, etc.

How is the illegal sign ordinance enforced?

- Public Works crews remove illegal signs on a daily basis.
- Each sign is logged by removal date, location and subject matter.

- The responsible party is determined, and a citation is issued in person by Public Works personnel.
- Each separate sign is punishable by a fine of \$50.
- Violators are required to appear in General Sessions Court.
- Final prosecution is at the discretion of the presiding judge.

What can you do?

- Do not remove signs yourself! Public Works will not accept signs removed by an individual, group or non-Public Works employees.
- You can report illegal signs by calling (901) 576-6851 or (901) 576-6500.

Are other government agencies involved with illegal sign enforcement?

- Yes – Memphis & Shelby County Code Enforcement, City of Memphis Engineering, Memphis Police Department and Memphis City Beautiful are involved.
- Shelby County also has an illegal sign ordinance. Call (901) 379-4270 for information on county codes.

★ City of Memphis Illegal Code Ordinance: City Code of Ordinances, Chapter 10, Article I2, Section 9 and amended by Ordinance No. 5073 in 2004.

HIGH WEEDS / WEED CONTROL

The Division of Community Enhancement has inspectors that administer weed control for rights-of-way, traffic islands, bridges, and privately owned vacant/neglected properties (5,000-plus lots or homes). Each year, inspectors receive and respond to thousands of service requests (complaints) related to overgrown weeds from the Mayor's Citizen Service Center (MCSC), (901) 576-6500.

Once a service request is received, an inspector is sent to verify that the location is in violation of the Weeds Ordinance (grass over 12 inches tall). If there is a violation, the property owner is sent by certified mail a notice to cut the property. It is always mailed to the address on record with the Shelby County Trustee. Only one notice is mailed per calendar year to the property owner.

After 7 days, the inspector returns to see if the owner has cut the location. If it is cut, the MCSC service request is closed. If it is not cut, a cutting order is issued, the location is cut, and the property owner is invoiced.

To report problems with high weeds in your neighborhood, call the Mayor's Citizens Service Center at (901) 576-6500 or visit the City of Memphis OnLine Support Center at www.memphistn.org.

POLICE

The Memphis Police Department is committed to making Memphis a safe place to live, work and play. Below are contact numbers to report crimes, loud disturbances, incidents involving drugs, abandoned vehicles and other quality of life issues that can affect us all.

MPD PRECINCTS

There are currently nine precincts in the Memphis area. Contact your local precinct for information on community services offered by the Memphis Police Department including additional patrols and vacation watches.

REMEMBER: Calls for police assistance **DO NOT** originate from the precincts. If you need police assistance, dial **(901) 545-COPS (2677)**. **For an EMERGENCY, always dial 911.**

- **North Precinct - (Old Allen Station)** 3633 Old Allen, (901) 636-4389
- **South Precinct - (Raines Station)** 791 East Raines Road, (901) 332-1860
- **East Precinct - (Mt. Moriah Station)** 2602 Mt. Moriah, (901) 795-3131
- **West Precinct - (Union Station)** 1925 Union Avenue, (901) 274-7012
- **Central Precinct - (Tillman Station)** 426 Tillman, (901) 636-3000
- **Downtown Precinct - (South Main Station)** 545 S. Main, (901) 525-9800
- **Ridgeway Station** - 3840 Ridgeway Road, (901) 576-4500
- **Southeast Precinct - (Airways Station)** 2245 Truitt, (901) 576-4800
- **Northeast Precinct - (Appling Farms Station)** 6850 Whitten Bend Cove, (901) 373-3883

Need a Neighborhood Watch Group started in your neighborhood? Want to learn more about the inner workings of the MPD through the Citizens Police Academy? Have a problem with basketball goals or abandoned vehicles? Need to report a drug activity in your area?

Abandoned Vehicles

Police Communications (Non-Emergency) (901) 545-COPS (2677)

Basketball Goals in Street

Police Communications (Non-Emergency) (901) 545-COPS (2677)

Neighborhood Watch Groups/Citizens Police Academy Coordinator

Please refer to your local precinct (see numbers above).

To Report Loud Music or Disturbances

Police Communications (Non-Emergency) (901) 545-COPS (2677)

Drug Hotline

Organized Crime Unit (901) 528-DOPE (2338)

Contact Numbers at Your Fingertips

Anti-Neglect	320-5356
Animal Services	362-5310
City Code Enforcement	576-7380
City of Memphis Mayor's Office	576-6000
Dead Animal Pickup	353-3897
Drain Maintenance	357-0100
Earth Complex	789-0510
Emergency Management Agency	458-1515
Gang Hotline	385-5186
Keep Tennessee Beautiful	678-4101
Landfill: • North Landfill	872-7200
• South Landfill	794-8070
Littering Motorist Hotline	
(24 Hour Recording)	522-5326 (52-CLEAN)
Mayor's Citizen Service Center	576-6500
Memphis City Beautiful Commission	522-1135
Memphis City Council	576-6786
Memphis City Permits	545-4080
Memphis Light Gas & Water	544-6549 (544-MLGW)
Memphis Police Non-Emergency	545-2677 (545-COPS)
Memphis/Shelby County Health Department	544-7600
Office of Youth Services & Community Affairs	636-6503
Neighborhood Relations	636-6589
Potholes	528-2911
Recycling Information	576-6851
Senior Services/Senior Yard Assistance (MIFA)	527-0208
Shelby County Code Enforcement	379-4270
Shelby County Environmental Court	545-3456
Shelby County Agricultural Extension Center	752-1207
Shelby County Mayor's Office	545-4500
Shelby County Mayor's Service Center	545-4311
Shelby County Roads & Bridges/Environmental	379-4410
Solid Waste Management	576-6851
Urban Forester for West Tennessee	754-5715
Vector Control (City/County)	324-5922